Death at War

727 When a warrior returns home in good health after a battle, the sacrificer or the village chief orders the performance of the ni yere klo, "game of the vibration of the soul," to celebrate his return. Men and women gather in the village square to sing: "The soul is come, the light of the soul is come, the drum of the soul will be played for it" (1). Next they form a circle and turning first in one direction and then

1. Ni nana, ni yelengu nana, ni dunu na fo o la.

in the other, throw a little water on the head of the individual concerned, thus "refreshing his soul."

766 When a man dies at war, the rituals whose object he becomes bring into play the nyama boli of the Komo, the altar dedicated to the conservation of the souls of those who die a vilent death.

In former times the stone which had mortally hit a warrior was carefully kept. The corpse was washed /200/ on cowries and on stones used for slings because its nyama, which impregnated them, made them more efficient in killing. The body was also transported to the exit of the village where each villager offered cowrie shells while he pronounced the name of the victim. Then it was swung three times in the direction of the village, first feet forward and next head forward. After all the villagers had retired to their homes, the Komo was brought out. The stone that had killed the man was struck to call forth his soul; then it was rubbed on the nyama boli to make the soul penetrate the altar. A dance was held with the altar, and the body [824] was buried and covered with fresh branches of ngamyã (2). The grave was watered to "refresh the dead man" while the chief

2. Celtis integrifolia.

was watered to "refresh the dead man" while the chief of the Komo made sacrifices over the nyama and the nimara boli.

Death Away from Home

766 The necessity of performing the rituals as well as their detailed 767 quality are such that a Bambara is always advised against expatriation.

766 In fact, if he dies far away his breath cannot be captured nor can the
167 successive transfers be made. For this reason the family head disclaims all responsibility in such a case by warning those who are about to leave for along time of the impossibility of fulfilling his duties toward them.

Nevertheless, a ritual has been instituted for the young men obliged
766 to leave the family groups because of military service. The case is submitted to the chief of the Komo and the party concerned has two goats sacrificed over the altars. While the blood runs, the chief asks the Komo to watch over the soul and to be willing to reclaim it as it would if the person died among his family.

If the news of the death of an absent person spreads, the family
[187] questions the Komo through divining procedures to find out if the soul has returned and if, by this fact, order has been reestablished.

Death by Lightning and Drowning

761 Death which occurs in certain ways considered abnormal and a
766 proof of Faro's wrath does not permit the reincarnation of the spiritual principles. This is true of men killed by the Komo for sorcery, and of people struck by lightning for having broken a taboo of Faro's. Their /201/ soul and their double are lost forever to their descendants, and their bodies thrown into the common grave.

Drowning is either accidental or due to Faro's wrath, in which case the corpse is returned with the nose and navel cut. In both instances, the double preserved in the water is not lost, but sacrifices are necessary for the return of the soul and of the double to a child in the family.

If the body has not risen to the surface, the father of the drowned person has the right to mourn him only when all the rituals have been performed. He asks the chief of the Komo to intercede with Faro to obtain his permission to search for the body in the water. He offers seven tomatoes which the chief throws into the water in exchange for the corpse in the presence of seven elders of his age grade. Some Bozo mobilized for this purpose dive in to bring back the body. The chief cuts the nose and the navel which he throws into the water as an offering. Then the corpse is placed flat on its stomach and pressed
[827] vigorously to extract the water, for to bury it full of water is equivalent to "burying rain" and dooming the countryside to drought.

[9] B. Population Movement

162 In 1912, Delafosse in Haut-Sénégal et Niger [Upper Senegal and Niger] gave a total of 538,450 Bambara in the following regions: [516]

Bamako	146,966	Bougouni	104,216	Ségou	109,758
Sikasso	30,000	Kita	2,339	Bafoulabé	2,100
Koutiala	30,035	Goumbou	22,110	San	20,103
Sokolo	19,996	Djenné	17,246	Niafunké	16,000
Nioro	9,355	Mopti	7,277	Bandiagara	928

161 All of these figures are notably lower than current ones. However, one must not infer a population increase too hastily. The difference in population figures result of better census methods rather than of a real increase.

Moreover, current demographic information must be considered as still approximate. In fact, censuses may go on for several years in a single region, and those of certain cantons are not yet finished. A large part of the population still avoids the census in order to escape taxes and military service. In certain villages the clandestine population may be as large as the declared population.

167 A number of the Bambara who leave the country temporarily as migratory workers in Guinea, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and the Gold Coast escape all registration.

161 563 Finally, as soon as we leave the purely Bambara region of the Ségou circle to go into the region of Bougouni, for example, a large part of the population counted as Bambara is in fact of mixed origin, Foula, Malinké, but follows Bambara custom, often no longer speaking the language.

563 This simple enumeration shows how rare it is to find a Bambara ethnic bloc which is not heavily mixed with other tribes. This dispersion is doubtless the result of a complicated historical evolution as we shall see further on.

But we can already point out that the link which unites the different peoples is the chefferie. The different peoples under a common chief little by little consider themselves to be of the same people as their chief. Sometimes the chief may have adopted the nationality of the country whose direction he has assumed.

As an indication, we give the following tables, furnished by the Bureau of Political Affairs of the Sudan. It has not yet been possible to evaluate the rates of births and deaths nor to establish

[text continues on p. 13]

[11] IV. General Movement of the Urban Population

161 The urban population numbers 220,317, or 6.5 percent of the
162 total population.

The principal urban centers are: Bamako, Kayes, Ségou, Mopti, Sikasso, and Gao. Except for Gao, the growth is considerable.

Cities	1939	1950	Increase	Percent of Increase
Bamako	32,761	85,000	52,239	162.5
Kayes	15,894	23,275	7,381	46.4
Ségou	8,391	15,335	6,944	83
Mopti	6,379	9,208	2,829	45
Sikasso	11,817	19,558	7,741	15.2
Gao	6,923	7,231	308	4.90

C. Emigration

167 It is rarely definitive. It is undertaken either for commercial reasons or from the desire of the young to earn enough to pay the bride price of their fiancée. It affects chiefly the circles of Gao, Timbuktu, Niafunké, Goundam, Mopti, Ségou, and Bamako. The region most often visited is the Gold Coast.

At Timbuktu, there is caravan traffic with Morocco by way of Taouedi and Tindouf, and with the Touat.

At Bandiagara, certain cantons (Dinangourou, Ibi, Iréli) experience a traditional temporary emigration to Upper Volta where the young go to work a year or two and then return.

At Bafoulabé, the emigration movement towards French Guinea remains very weak, about 20 persons.

At Bougouni, about 1,500 young people annually leave for the Ivory Coast, following the example of the Dioula. This is a seasonal movement, but the youths often prolong the venture year after year before going home, and some of them ultimately settle on the Ivory Coast.

At Nioro, from Bakounou northwards (circle of Aioun and Atrouss [Aioun el Atrous?], there is an agricultural nomadism to new lands. This migration from one settlement to another is concerned only with the fertility of the soil, without regard for the border at Nioro and Yélimané. One also notes temporary emigrations towards

167 Senegal (five to ten years) and seasonal emigrations of commercial character in the dry season, following the crops, from Nioro and Yélimané toward the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Guinea.

At San, a large number of emigrants leave for the Ivory Coast where they go to work for several years on the plantations; they return home with their savings.

At Ségou, movement is not noticeable. A few departures for the [12] Ivory Coast are recorded in the subdivision of Macina (settlers of the Niger Office) ; 879 departures.

At Sikasso, numerous youths from 18 to 30 years old emigrate from October to May to Bobo-Dioulasso and the Ivory Coast. Almost all return in May when the fields are prepared for cultivation, but some finally settle abroad permanently, mainly in the lower Ivory Coast. This movement is increasing because of high salaries.

D. Immigration

Immigration has a sporadic and seasonal character (gold prospectors from Guinea, fishermen from Niger, cattle breeders from Mauritania). The only regular immigration is that of the colonists of the Niger Office.

At Bafoulabé, one notes the temporary presence of 10,000 gold washers from Guinea and the Ivory Coast; 75 farmers from Senegal and Guinea have settled permanently.

At Bamako, Guinean gold washers come in the dry season to work at the placers of the subdivision of Kangaba. They go home at the beginning of winter.

At Gao, when the Niger's water level begins to fall, Haoussa [Hausa] and Bozo fishermen install themselves on the banks. They leave in August, loaded with dried or smoked fish.

From the interior, Kounba, driven by the drought, look for pastures at water holes (leading to friction with the original occupants).

Kayes is an area of nomadism for the Moors of Kiffa and Sélibaby.

At Mopti, a large number of foreigners from the Upper Volta are found in the cities. They return to their country in the rainy season.

● 167 At Nioro, during eight months of the year, live most of the Moors who go up to Mauritania at the beginning of the rains.

At Ségou, the colonists of the Niger Office are concentrated. In 1951 1,166 arrived, 660 coming from Nioro and 506 from Macina.

Temporary Workers

Circles of Origin	Temporary Workers Leaving in Official Convoys in:			
	1947	1948	1949	1950
Bafoulabé	1,017	1,008	969	492
Bamako	6,626	4,376	4,046	8,678
Bougouni	405	776	3,000	36
Kayes	1,794	2,195	3,230	1,368
Kita	1,419	1,559	1,352	226
Nioro	2,744	747	3,000	1,504
				135
Totals	14,005	10,661	15,602	12,439

[13] Individual migrations are very numerous, and the real number of temporary workers is much higher than the official figure. Currently, one notes a drop due to two causes:

1. The discontent of the workers after the 1949 season. In 1948, they had brought home from 15,000 to 20,000 francs; in 1949 from 5,000 to 10,000, and as little as 1,500 to 2,000 francs for the Siné Saloum. Some were repatriated at the expense of their families, others preferred to stay in the Senegal to avoid reproaches. The reasons for the setback may be laid to a bad distribution of rainfall and to insufficient lodgings due to the unexpected arrival of too many workers.

[209] 2. The counter-propaganda of the elders, who want to keep the young workers in the Sudan.

244 The Bambara groundnut ripens its seed underground. It is cultivated from the southern border of the Sahara to the Cape, but its primary home [31] is in the Sudan where the greatest number of cultivated varieties is found. (1)

1. Jacques Félix, for a study on the Bambara groundnut (Voandzeia subterrena), Agriculture tropicale [Tropical Agriculture], January-February, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale.]

Manioc and yams at certain points along the Niger escape the devastations of the Acridiidae insects which can not attack their roots.

Other crops are used to balance the diet: condiments and [263] fleshy plants, such as, pimento, sesame, various labiates, okra, [177] sorrel, squash, peanuts (imported in the sixteenth century from America). Peanuts, to thrive, need loose, light soil. They are sown in June at the beginning of the rainy season and are harvested in [252] November. The natives eat them roasted; they make oil and soap from them and give the stalks to their animals. Cultivation is entirely in the hands of the natives. In Senegal manpower is insufficient; [464] before 1940 thousands of Sudanese workers were called upon each [167] season, particularly Bambara, the "Navétanes," who hired themselves out to the farmers of Senegal in order to acquire the textiles and other products they needed. The peanut is an export product. Also cultivated are nitrogenous vegetables (Bambara groundnuts, black-eyed peas, dolichos, kissis, etc.) and the numerous and varied amaranths, tomatoes, eggplants, gourds, and, since 1940, potatoes which are grown more and more.

222 Finally, we will cite: a) the gathering of wild plants which 263 serve as condiments: the fruits of the baobab (Adansonia digitata), of the corchorus, of the Parkia biglobosa [néré], and of the karite tree (Butyrospermum), formerly called the "butter tree," which is cultivated to some degree -- the fruit is something like that of the palm tree and contains a core whose kernels enclose a fatty matter, shea butter, valued for making soap, as an illuminant, for the toilet; 222 b) the gathering of scarcity foods: baobab, cenchrus, cassia, the kola nut (Sterculia acuminata). Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;